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INCREASE MATHER.





INCREASE MATHER,

THE AGENT OF MASSACHUSETTS COLONY
IN ENGLAND FOR THE CONCESSION
OF A CHARTER.

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N the first volume of these Tracts, the central figure was that of Andros, the able and resolute representative of that policy which fought to combine the independent Colonies in one Dominion of New England. The scene of the conflict was cis-Atlantic, and the victory was gained by an uprising of the people in which no individual laid claim to the leadership.

In our second volume we have collected the evidences of the farther strife which was waged on English soil by those who strove successfully to restore to the agglomerated Colonies their former individuality, and in a large measure their former freedom. Here again, one leader, Increase Mather, stands out pre-eminent as the champion of his cause, fighting earnestly and almost unaided against the numerous and obscure enemies of Charter government. Yet important as this

this episode in his life appears, it is but a portion of the services which he rendered to his native country, and it would therefore be an act of injustice to affix his name to this collection.

We do not intend to trace the early life of Increase Mather, interesting as the task would prove, since the services which he performed as a political agent were so widely differed from the duties which he fulfilled as a clergyman. It will be sufficient to say of him, that in 1687 he might be regarded as the leader of the clergy of Massachusetts. The son of a prominent minister, well educated, a powerful preacher, he was chosen in 1664, at the age of twenty-five years, pastor of the Second Church in Boston. He not only attended to his clerical duties with fidelity, but he was gradually forced to accept the burden of other public offices. In 1680, he was Moderator of the Reforming Synod convened to decide upon a Confession of Faith. In 1685, he was appointed acting President of Harvard University, and was thus placed at the head of the educational system of the Colony. He had even ventured to take an active part in politics, by advising the inhabitants of Boston at a town-meeting, after the writ of *Quo Warranto* against the Charter had been issued, to stand by their privileges and not to give away what was the inheritance of their fathers.

When therefore the inhabitants of Massachusetts, impelled by a profound discontent with the centralizing government of Andros, sought a bold, honest and able representative to make an effort for the restoration of their beloved Charter,

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Increase Mather was confessedly the person, almost the sole one, for this high and important office. The public desire was accordingly manifested to him, but not until he had consulted the brethren of his church and obtained their approval, did he consent to accept the charge.

Early in April, 1688, Mather sailed for England, unprovided with the formal credentials hitherto conferred by the General Court on its Agents, but still confessedly the representative of the hopes and wants of the greater portion of the citizens of Massachusetts. He bore with him the Addresses of the churches, expressing their thanks for the Declaration of Indulgence recently granted by James II. A more important part of his mission was to lay at the foot of the throne the complaints of the Colonists against the administration of Andros. His departure was hurried and stealthy, since the personal enmity of Randolph had led him to annoy Mather by an unwarranted suit. The Government had full information of the intentions of the envoy, but Andros was apparently too secure in his position to interpose any restrictions.

On the 25th of May, 1688, Mather arrived at London, where the state of public affairs seemed anything but propitious. The closing struggle between the King and his people had already commenced. A week before the arrival of Mather, the seven Bishops had signed the petition requesting the King to dispense with the distribution and reading of that Declaration of Indulgence, for which such loyal thanks had been forwarded from New England. The position

tion of the Agent was thus full of difficulties. On the one hand, the King was still the controller of the fortunes of the Colony, and had perhaps earned its gratitude. On the other, it was patent to Mather that this royal favor had been shown against the wishes of the English people, was pronounced to be unconstitutional, and its acceptance might provoke a sharp retribution at the next turn of affairs. His natural advisers, the English Dissenters, were disquieted and divided upon the subject. Macaulay, in the seventh chapter of his history, has fully described the situation of these steadfast congregations, so recently the object of scorn and cruel persecution, now suddenly elevated to the rank of arbiter between the contending factions, and assiduously courted by both.

For a time a portion of the leading Dissenters were in favor of accepting the Royal favor, and to this opinion Mather at first inclined, influenced perhaps by his friends Penn and Alsop. On the 30th of May, 1688, he waited on the King with the Address of the Congregations of New England and a similar document from the inhabitants of Plymouth Colony. James received these loyal effusions graciously, and promised the petitioners "a Magna Charta for Liberty of Conscience." Two days later Mather was again admitted into the King's closet, and then, in reply to a question, ventured to speak of Andros as an opponent of the Declaration. Being instructed by James to commit to writing the matters wherein the Colony desired relief, he promptly prepared a petition which he presented on the 2nd of July.

The

The month of June had been full of important events. On the tenth, the ill-fated Prince of Wales was born, and the last days of the month had witnessed the triumphant acquittal of the seven Bishops. Amid all these pressing affairs, the King seems to have received the petition courteously, and repeated the promise of his continued favor to New England. Then occurred a strange conversation. To the King, who had but a few months before forced the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford to yield a portion of their wealth and honors to Roman Catholics, Mather now preferred a request for a Charter for Harvard College. It was, he said, hard that the College built by Non-Conformists should be taken from them and put into the hands of Conformists. The King gravely replied, "It is unreasonable and it shall not be."

Up to this time Mather had made no attempts to obtain a renewal of the Charter of the Colony. He desired to check the progress of Episcopacy in Massachusetts, to obtain a favorable decision in regard to the titles of lands here, to which the Crown made great though vague pretensions, and he may have hoped to procure the recall of Andros. These projects were not unreasonable, and the policy of James was for the present favorable to them. The King indeed was apparently disposed to treat the Colonists as his own especial tenants. His position as Proprietor of the Colony of New York before his accession to the throne, had rendered him familiar with American affairs. The opinion was now expressed by the Courtiers that all New England was in like manner held by the Crown, independent of the Kingdom, and was subject to such laws, ordinances, and forms of government

ernment, as the Crown should think fit to establish. Hence the King might well be pleased to waive one form of sovereignty over a people over whom he claimed a supreme authority. He could even afford to encourage one body of heretics to the confusion of another, if he entertained the expectation of eventually setting up the Roman Catholic religion in all the Colonies.

For three months Mather forbore to seek another interview, though he neglected no opportunity to make friends among those who enjoyed the Royal favor. His chief counsellor and associate was Sir Henry Ashurst, a wealthy baronet and member of Parliament, whose family had always been friendly to New England. As a fellow Dissenter he was attached to Mather, and was unwearied in his efforts to serve the Colony. Thus introduced at the outset, Mather soon proved his fitness to conduct negotiations in the unaccustomed atmosphere of a court. In a short time, William Penn, Lord Sunderland, the Earl of Melfort, and the terrible Jeffries, were numbered among his patrons. Even Father Petre was said to be willing to speak a good word for New England.

With the gain of such supporters, the Agent seems to have become more ambitious in his views. He hoped now to regain the old Charter of Massachusetts legally forfeited some years before. This portion of his history is passed over rapidly in his son's narrative, but some facts are known. In August, Mather, acting with Samuel Nowell and Elisha Hutchinson, had petitioned the Lords of the Committee,
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asking for a confirmation of titles and the liberty of an Assembly, but Sunderland had plainly refused the latter clause. On the 26th of September, Mather had an interview with the King, and again had received ample promises.

To this period, and to the pen of Mather, may be fairly attributed the pamphlet entitled 'New England Vindicated from the Aspersions of those who said that the Charter was taken away because the Colonists destroyed the manufactures and commerce of England.'

The King had at last been aroused to the dangers which threatened him from the plans of the Prince of Orange and his adherents. He attempted to conciliate his subjects by concessions which might have been effectual earlier. Several important steps were taken in the month of October, notably the restoration of their franchises to the municipal corporations. On the 16th of the month, the Agents for New England had another interview with the King, and were regaled with more promises. For a time it seemed as if these promises would be kept, but on a false report of the downfall of the Prince's expedition, the affair was stopped, and Mather then felt the falseness of his hopes. Perhaps believing that the bad news from Holland was true, the Agents preferred a final request to the Committee, asking only to have the Council in New England remodeled and made more efficient. Thus low had the hopes and expectations of the New England party fallen.

The reaction, however, was fated to be a speedy one.
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The revolutionary movement in England was not to be stayed by the tardy peace-offerings of the vacillating King, and on the 5th of November, 1688, William landed at Torbay, thenceforward to remain as the chosen ruler of the realm. The succeeding steps of the revolution are well-known; we will cite but two dates. On the 23rd of December, 1688, James fled from London, and on the 13th of February, 1688-9, William and Mary were proclaimed King and Queen of England.

Although Mather was not actively concerned in the conspiracy against James, he could not have been ignorant of what was intended. It must be remembered that he was not a stranger in England. After taking his degree as Master of Arts in 1658, at Trinity College, Dublin, he had preached for two years in various parts of England, and had been chaplain to the garrison at Guernsey. At that time he had made many friends, and since his return he had cultivated intimate relations with the English Dissenters. His brother Nathaniel, after the Restoration, was for some time a preacher at Amsterdam. Mather had long been in correspondence with the prominent Dissenters there, especially with Abraham Kick, the friend of Shaftesbury, at whose house that nobleman died. It is inconceivable, therefore, that the Agent of Massachusetts remained in ignorance of the expectations and plans of the patriots.

Still, although the leaders of the English Dissenters could promise a valuable addition to the forces of the Prince of Orange, Mather himself could not contribute a single soldier
to

to the cause. He could only say that the congregations of New England prayed for the success of the Protestant religion, and would joyfully acknowledge William as their rightful King.

On the 18th of December, William arrived at St. James's, and on the 21st, the clergy of London, headed by Compton, their Bishop, presented an Address of congratulation. Among them were mingled some of the Dissenting ministers, to whose presence Compton gracefully referred. On the 2nd of January, 1688-9, the Dissenting ministers to the number of ninety or more presented their Address. Although we do not find it stated that Mather was present on either occasion, the fact that he reprinted these two Addresses in his pamphlet entitled "The Miseries of New England," warrants us in supposing that he accompanied his brethren.

On the 9th of January, 1688-9, Mather was favored with an interview with William, being introduced by Philip, Lord Wharton, "renowned as a distributor of Calvinistic tracts and a patron of Calvinistic divines," and father of the notorious Thomas, Earl and Marquis of Wharton. Wharton spoke earnestly in favor of the petition then presented, saying that the New Englanders asked not for money or men, but for their ancient privileges. The Prince replied that he intended to take the best care he could about it, and would so instruct his Secretary, Mr. Jephson. Lord Wharton then carried Mather to the Secretary and said to him, "Cousin, observe this gentleman, and when ever he comes to you, receive him as if I came myself."

Soon

Soon after, the Agent received the assistance of another powerful friend. On February 1st, 1688-9, Abraham Kick wrote from the Hague to the Princess Mary in behalf of the New England Colonists, begging her "to take the first opportunity to help them to the restoration of their ancient Patent, privileges and liberties."

At this time Mather must have made public his account of the "Miseries of New England by reason of an Arbitrary Government erected there under Sir Edmund Andros," since a copy reached Boston in season to be printed before the end of the current year, which closed on the 24th of March, 1689, according to our modern reckoning. Nor did his exertions cease here; being informed by Mr. Jephson that a Circular Letter was to be sent to all the Plantations, confirming the existing governments until farther orders, Mather prevailed on the Secretary to present a remonstrance to the King, and succeeded in stopping the letters for New England. The date of the letters thus intercepted was January 12th, 1688-9.

This prompt action was of the highest importance to the Colonists. New England was thus separated from the other Colonies, and from that time the question of its Charters was an affair to be considered apart. But for Mather's dexterous intervention Andros would have been confirmed, and as he proved afterward acceptable to the English Court, he would probably have remained to complete the consolidation of the Dominion of New England. It was indeed a turning-point in our national history.

Though

Though now successful, the most delicate duties devolved upon Mather. William "had been bred a Presbyterian, and was from rational conviction a Latitudinarian," and there was therefore no reason to fear that during his reign Popery or Prelacy would be forced upon the Congregationalists of New England. But religious liberty was not the only desire of the great body of the Colonists; the restoration of that Charter, which as interpreted by them, granted virtually political independence, was their dearest wish: and that Charter was an offence in the eyes of all parties in England. William, as King of England, was not ready to make concessions that had been condemned and cancelled by his predecessors. An early effort was made by Mather, at an interview granted him on March 14th, 1688-9, to secure the Royal favor, but the King significantly replied to his representations, "I believe they are a good people, but I doubt there have been irregularities in their government."

For the present, the King promised to recall Andros at once to answer for any mal-administration. Various plans were suggested for the provisional government of New England, and on the 26th of February, 1688-9, the King proposed to send two Commissioners to take the place of Andros until a new Charter should be prepared. In the meantime, before the tidings of his Majesty's intentions could reach them, the Colonists had taken the decision into their own hands. On the 18th of April, 1689, the inhabitants of Boston rose against Andros and his coadjutors, and established a provisional government of their own. A Council of Safety was formed, two Conventions were held, and

on the 24th of May, Bradstreet and the magistrates chosen in 1686 reassumed the charge of affairs until there should be other instructions sent from England.

The news of this revolution in New England reached London towards the end of June, and on the 4th of July, 1689, Mather had another interview with the King. William then expressed his approbation of the action of the Colonists, and on the 12th of August a Royal letter was addressed to Massachusetts, ratifying the assumption of government there for the time being.

Mather, while thus solicitous of obtaining the consent of the Crown, was not regardless of the great power of Parliament to assist in restoring the Charter. The Convention Parliament, which had called William and Mary to the throne, was still in session, and was strenuous in reforming abuses. By advice of his friends, Mather procured a vote of the House of Commons, "that the taking away of the New England Charters was a grievance, and that they should be restored." A section to this effect was inserted in the Corporation Bill. This step was gained before Parliament took a recess on the 20th of August, 1689.

Besides these appeals to the authorities, Mather evidently sought to enlist the sympathies of the public on his side. We have mentioned two of his publications during the previous nine months. His third essay seems to have been "The Present State of New England," &c., licensed July 30th, 1689, in which he gave an account of what had been done

done towards establishing a prosperous colony under the old Charter.

Soon after this, probably after the reassembling of Parliament on the 19th of October, a "Reply to the Vindication" was published, which set forth the impropriety of including the New England Charters in the Corporation Bill. This controversy and the hopes of the Agents were terminated by the fate of the main bill. After a severe contest between the Whigs and Tories, the most important clauses of the bill were stricken out, and Parliament was prorogued on the 27th of January, 1689-90. Its formal dissolution took place a few days later.

Thus passed away the year 1689, without any farther change in the affairs of New England. To William, however, the year had been crowded with important events. On the 12th of March, James landed in Ireland, and maintained his sway over a large portion of that island throughout the year. On the 7th of May, war with France was proclaimed. The Highland clans threatened for a moment to restore Scotland to the Stuarts, but that chance had expired with the death of Dundee at the battle of Killiecrankie on the 27th of July. In England the dissensions of the rival parties had required the utmost skill of William to prevent the Revolution from ending in anarchy or a restoration.

Towards the end of this year also, the opponents of the Charter began to make themselves heard. Byfield and another writer had published in England the Colonists' version

version of the overthrow of Andros. The opinions of the inhabitants were not however unanimously in favor of the change. The Episcopalians of Boston sent to England a strong remonstrance, and similar documents were forwarded from the citizens in Charlestown and the settlers in Maine. Many of the magistrates appointed or retained by Andros were sorry at his overthrow, and Gershom Bulkeley published a pamphlet to show that the new government was illegal. Palmer, one of the ablest of Andros's adherents, prepared in prison a defence of the late government, which found a printer in the distant Colony of Pennsylvania, and was doubtless freely circulated even in Boston.

We may imagine, that by the beginning of the year 1690, all of these documents had reached London, and early in the year, Andros, Dudley, and several others of their party were sent thither by command of the King. Mather and Ashurst, now recognized as Agents by the restored government of New England, received as colleagues Elisha Cooke and Thomas Oakes. Very little progress however was made in the year 1690 towards fulfilling the wishes of the Colonists. The King was busy with more important matters. His new Parliament met in March; in June he landed in Ireland, then in open hostility to him. On the 1st of July he gained the battle of the Boyne, and five days later he entered Dublin, virtually the victor in the last struggle to be made for James II. Early in September William returned to England, and until the close of the year was chiefly occupied in arranging affairs so that he could leave England for the camp of his allies abroad.

Mather

Mather says that during this year he made "some essays to see if by a writ of error in judgment the case of the Massachusetts Colony might be brought out of Chancery into the King's Bench;" but this was "defeated by a surprizing Providence." By this phrase we are probably not to understand that any special accident overthrew the plan of the Agents, but rather as we should now say, "that it was providentially defeated." There can be little doubt that Mather referred rather to such a division in the councils of the Agents themselves as led to an abandonment of the scheme of a reversal of the judgment. Elisha Cooke was for the old Charter or none at all, and Oakes joined with him. Mather and Ashurst were in favor of making the best terms possible. The disputes between these four had gone so far that Cooke and Oakes would not sign the articles preferred against Andros before the Privy Council, April 17th, 1690, and the prosecution fell through on that ground. Hard words were exchanged, Mather saying that the Earl of Monmouth told him "that they had cut the throat of their country in not signing," and Cooke alleging the advice of Sir John Somers in defense of his conduct. A false rumor was circulated that Cooke and Oakes said 'that they could have saved the old Charter if it had not been for Mather, and that he had betrayed his country.' Evidently the multitude of counsellors had not strengthened the hands of the Agents.

Cooke continued an opponent to the end, and refused to take any steps towards obtaining a new Charter, but the others decided to trust to the kindness of the King. The Earl

Earl of Monmouth presented their request, and it was referred to the two Lord-Chief-Justices, Holt and Pollexfen, the Attorney-General Treby, and the Solicitor-General Somers, with whom Mather was on friendly terms. He was present at the consultations at which the new Charter was prepared, and the report, having been submitted to the King, was forwarded to the Committee for Trade and Plantations on the 1st of January, 1690-1.

In 1690, the able attack upon Mather entitled "New England's Faction Discovered" was published. After the unconditional release of Andros in April, his friends seem to have been active and eloquent in opposing a re-grant of a Charter to Massachusetts. Palmer issued a reprint of his Defence, wisely expunging the Scriptural arguments which were specially adapted to a New England audience. These two writers not only praised the conduct of Andros, but skillfully displayed the feebleness of his successors in the government.

In reply to them, Mather undoubtedly published his "Vindication of New England," containing the first Petition of the Episcopalians of Boston. Soon after, the Government of Massachusetts put forth their statement entitled "The Revolution in New England Justified and the People there Vindicated," and the accompanying "Narrative of the Proceedings of Andros," by several of his Council. Indeed, the latter pamphlet, dated at Boston, Feb. 4th, 1690-1, refers especially to "such untrue Accounts as that which goes under the name of Capt. John Palmer's, and that scandalous
Pamphlet

Pamphlet entitled 'New England's Faction Discovered,' supposed to be written by an Implacable Enemy of all good men, and a person that for Impudence and Lying has few Equals in the World." By this polite description we learn that Randolph was credited with the authorship.

Lastly, to the pen of some friend of the Agents, we may attribute the pamphlet called "The Humble Address of the Publicans of New England," with its insinuations that the second Petition of the Episcopalians was intended for which-ever King might succeed, and that their protestations of loyalty were worthless. The contest between the two parties was maintained by able champions, and the King as usual agreed with neither extreme.

On the 18th of January, 1690-1, King William failed for the Hague, where he remained until the middle of April. As we have seen, the matter of the new Charter was in the hands of the Committee for Trade and Plantations, and Mather was busy in securing the interest of all who might aid him. He published a paper of "Reasons for the Confirmation of Charter Privileges;" he gained the support of such non-conformist ministers as had influence with noblemen; he specially obtained the good offices of Archbishop Tillotson and Bishop Burnet. Finally, on the 9th of April, 1691, he was granted an interview with the Queen, in which her Majesty displayed her usual kindness of heart, and promised to use her influence with the King in behalf of the Colony.

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In April, William returned to England for a fortnight, and in that time Mather was favored with two interviews with him. At the first, he only presented Addressees from the General Court, and from a number of London merchants. On the 28th of April he had a second audience, when he urged the difference between New England and the other Colonies.

The work of preparing the new Charter was now fairly commenced, and the first question submitted to the King was whether the Colonists should make their own laws and appoint their own officers, or there should be a Governor appointed by the Crown, who should have the power of vetoing laws. The King decided for a Royal Governor, but avoided a direct decision of the question as to the veto power.

On the 1st of May, 1691, William again departed for the Continent, and Mather soon became involved in disputes with the Lords of the Council as to the terms to be employed in the new Charter. The Council evidently intended that the Governor should have the veto power; Mather strenuously endeavored to persuade them to adopt a plan which the Attorney-General Treby had drawn up at his solicitation, and by which the Governor had not this power in any case. The matter was referred to the King, but he was too intent on his campaign in Flanders to reply. Mather protested to the Ministers that he would sooner part with his life than consent to their plan, or to 'anything that might infringe any liberty or privilege that justly belonged to his country.'

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Their significant reply was, ‘ that nobody expected or desired his consent ; that they did not look on the Agents from New England as plenipotentiaries from another sovereign state ; but that if they declared that they would not submit unto the King’s pleasure, his Majesty would settle the country as he pleased, and they were to take what would follow.’

The irrepressible Agent, however, continued to protest, and persuaded his friends at Court, and even the Queen, to write to the King, asking either that his plan might be adopted, or that the Charter might be delayed until the King’s return to England. Believing that he had thus secured a respite, Mather went to recruit his health “ to the Waters,” probably to the fashionable resort at Bath ; but he was quickly recalled by the news that the King had on the 10th of August signified his approval of the Council’s plan, and had ordered the Charter to be proceeded with forthwith. Nothing remained but acquiescence, and Mather now tried only to obtain all possible concessions in the details. He succeeded in having the territories of Nova Scotia, Maine and Plymouth annexed to Massachusetts, but failed in having New Hampshire also included. He had the form of Oaths amended to suit his views, and obtained the addition of a most important clause confirming all grants made by the General Court, notwithstanding any defect that there might be in form of conveyance. The new Charter, thus framed and amended, was signed on the 7th of October, 1691.

Here ended the labors of Mather as Agent for Massachusetts. On the 4th of November he waited on his Majesty to thank
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thank him for the Charter, and to notify him that the Agents united in recommending that Sir William Phips should be appointed Governor. On the 7th of March, 1691-2, Mather and the newly commissioned Governor left London, and on the 29th sailed from Plymouth, under convoy of the *Nonestuch* frigate, for Boston, where they arrived on the 14th of May, 1692.

It would be foreign to our purpose to attempt to explain the differences between the old Charter and the new one, or to account for the dissatisfaction which was caused by the change. Mather received but scanty praise for his labor and was even forced to defend his actions. It seems to us, however, that the information collected in this volume will render it evident that the Colony was most fortunate in its choice of an Agent: That he was sagacious, eloquent, dauntless and incorruptible: that he maintained his dignity under trying circumstances: and that without sacrificing honesty to expediency, he proved himself fit to treat with statesmen and to gain the favor of sovereigns. If any importance be attached to the growth of the political system of New England, let it be remembered, that at the most critical period of its history, the energies of Increase Mather gave it a form and shape which it has never lost.

W. H. W.



INCREASE MATHER.



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